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**MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS**  
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**EAST VALLEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS**

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is developing a new Regional Transportation Plan for the MAG region. As part of this effort, MAG conducted a series of focus groups to identify and document transportation issues and concerns. The focus groups were held throughout the Valley to capture ideas from geographically and ethnically diverse groups of participants. The findings will assist MAG in identifying regional values, goals, and objectives that will guide the development of the Regional Transportation Plan.

The format of the Focus Groups included an opportunity for interactive discussion among participants, as well as a voting exercise that provided insight on priorities. To help structure the process, the discussions were organized into five topics areas. The topics included:

- ✕ Demographic and Social Change;
- ✕ The New Economy;
- ✕ Environmental and Resource Issues;
- ✕ Land Use and Urban Development; and
- ✕ Transportation and Technology.

Participants were encouraged to provide their own issues and concerns that related to each topic, both individually and in a round-table discussion. The responses received were documented in essentially a “verbatim” format so that the message intended by the participant was accurately conveyed.

The results of the **East Valley Focus Group** are attached. This material has been divided into four parts as follows:



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**Part I. Key Focus Group Issues:** In Part I, the key issues identified at the East Valley Focus Group are listed by topic area. These issues are those voted by the participants to be the top two concerns in each topic area. Due to ties, certain topics may have more than two issues listed.

**Part II. Comprehensive Listing of Participant Issues:** In Part II, all the issues identified by the individual participants are listed. These issues have been grouped by topic area.

**Part III. Roundtable Discussion Comments:** In Part III, the results from a roundtable discussion are listed. These comments were recorded when all the focus group attendees participated in a general discussion of issues prior to voting on the top issues in each topic area.

**Part IV. Additional Comments Received:** This section is a verbatim recording of a letter received by one the focus group participants.

If you have any questions or comments on the focus group process or the attached results, please contact Roger Herzog, MAG, at 602-254-6300 or rherzog@mag.maricopa.gov.



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## EAST VALLEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

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### PART I. KEY FOCUS GROUP ISSUES

The participants of the East Valley Focus Group were given the opportunity to vote on their top two issues in each of the five topic areas. The two issues receiving the most votes are listed under each topic. Due to ties, certain topics may have more than two issues listed.

#### *DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE PRIMARY ISSUES*

- x Low cost transportation will be required for low-income families.
- x [Need to improve] quality [of] air.
- x [Better] prepare transportation for elderly population.

#### *THE NEW ECONOMY PRIMARY ISSUES*

- x Need to attract and retain high-tech manufacturing.
- x [Need to] improve education.

#### *ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES PRIMARY ISSUES*

- x [Need] clean water sources – supply.
- x How many gallons of water evaporate from Tempe Lake each day?

#### *LAND USE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT PRIMARY ISSUES*

- x Build transit centers for access to express bus or commuter rail.
- x Continue to expand major arteries to feed public transit hubs.
- x Regional system of pedestrian, biking, and equestrian trails is needed.
- x Developers must be held responsible for impact fees.



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## PART I. KEY FOCUS GROUP ISSUES (CONTINUED)

### *TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGY PRIMARY ISSUES*

- x [Need] governance – bringing all entities together.
- x 303 – Valley View Parkway, outer loop around the Valley.

## PART II. COMPREHENSIVE LISTING OF PARTICIPANT ISSUES

The following is a comprehensive listing of the issues that individual participants of the East Valley Focus Group identified as their concerns under each topic.

### DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE ISSUES

- x [Need] massive public transportation.
- x Increased emphasis on safety.
- x Door to door services for seniors.
- x Need more affordable housing.
- x More seniors – need to improve mobility.
- x Population increases will be huge.
- x Have safe bike/pedestrian routes for children to schools and retail.
- x [Improve] public transportation.
- x [Need] adequate and quality of water supply.
- x Schools – how good [are they]? [Are they] forward-looking?
- x Green spaces – conserving them [is a priority].
- x [Need] affordable housing.
- x Public information access (i.e., libraries, computer access, community theatre, etc.).





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**DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE ISSUES (CONTINUED)**

- x Need for control and/or cooperation of immigration.
- x [Improve] public transportation.
- x Will need more personalized systems of transportation as people grow older.
- x Have local groups to help assimilate into America lifestyles and learning English language.
- x Need lower priced housing.
- x Social activities closer or have mass transportation.
- x Shopping areas closer – so traveling so far isn't required.
- x English language stressed in schools and recreation activities.
- x What is going to be torn down to build affordable housing/and or schools?
- x Safety must be enforced. Accidents of one kind or another everyday.
- x Proper balance in all modes of transportation (i.e., freeways, rail, bus, other).
- x Low cost transportation required to service industrial centers. Land values will be such that large parking facilities will not be possible.
- x AJ (Apache Junction) has grown so fast without the resources to sustain it. We need better facilities.
- x More young families are moving to A.J [Apache Junction]. Will they find enough social and entertaining things to do that are inexpensive?
- x Keep the public schools open year round – stagger the semesters if necessary – make use of the school buildings year round.
- x Have more training and interests for the young people (keep them busy with projects, art, theatre, sports, construction, medical, music, etc.) – keep them off the streets.
- x Have contests, shows, prizes etc., to reward the young people so they will become interested in community projects – they will be proud to join such groups – (recognition is very important to everyone, especially the young folks).
- x [Need] new schools.
- x More planning on road safety [is needed].





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### THE NEW ECONOMY ISSUES

- x Developing family wage jobs [is necessary].
- x Improve training opportunities.
- x Preserve adequate lands for industrial development.
- x Generating large numbers of commuter traffic.
- x Low skill/low income jobs that result in inner city areas, barrios, run-down, crime -infested neighborhoods and areas of the cities.
- x Need to attract and retain corporate headquarters.
- x [Need] transport for job centers.
- x Consolidation and lack of corporate headquarters.
- x Stop home manufacturing.
- x [Need] public transportation – light rail.
- x Good air quality.
- x [Need] adequate water (good water).
- x Based on technical services – not only in United States, but world-wide.
- x Service industries such as healthcare and preventative healthcare a necessity.
- x Education – foremost – better schools – must pull the poorer schools’ standards up so that all children are on an equal footing or as nearly equal.
- x Taxes must be more equal. No one company can shift their tax burden from country to country exploiting that country’s people.
- x Warming of the earth will affect the economic base.
- x Must protect the quality of life while enhancing the base economics of life.
- x Encourage hi-tech industries.
- x Encourage industries to use telecommute where possible.
- x New jobs are being created by the rapid growth in A.J., but wages are low.



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**THE NEW ECONOMY ISSUES (CONTINUED)**

- x Where will the money come from to patronize the new restaurants, stores, etc. being built?
- x We need a good rail system to connect the towns and cities; even to connect the major cities – Phoenix and Tucson.
- x Industrial centers will primarily be office buildings (multi-story) as more manufacturing shifts to low cost labor countries. Proper transportation and parking will be issues.
- x Need more corporate leadership.
- x Competition and change will increase.

**ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES ISSUES**

- x [Need] clean air.
- x [Need] good recreational facilities.
- x [Need] enough green areas for each community.
- x Electrical power will be an issue [in the future].
- x Current air quality issues will multiply rapidly as more cars, buses, etc are used.
- x Cleaner fuel burning alternatives will be a necessity, for both auto/bus transportation and power generating plants.
- x Save adequate open space.
- x Land use plans coordinated with transportation.
- x Air quality will not improve by itself.
- x [Need] good quality of water. Sufficient supply – especially here in the desert.
- x Protect our forests by replanting.
- x Protect our National Parks. No longer ignore normal upkeep.
- x Make our parks accessible to all. Implement bus service where necessary if overcrowding with cars is causing problems (i.e., Yellowstone, Yosemite).
- x Make green spaces mandatory when developing new areas as well as play areas.



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**ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES ISSUE IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY (CONTINUED)**

- x [Need] growth restrictions.
- x Make homeowners clean up.
- x [Need] air quality improvements.
- x [Need] open space preservation.
- x Air quality [needs to be] improved.
- x Open space needs to be preserved.
- x Like to see more space left for local wildlife.
- x [Need] improvement on water such as taste.
- x [Improve] air quality standards – maintain/improve.
- x [Need] preservation of natural desert environments.
- x Water resources should be conserved.
- x Reduce transportation's impact on the environment.
- x Leapfrog development resulting in loss of open space preservation and loss of recreational opportunities.
- x Large numbers of commuters will result in highway gridlock and dangerous levels of air quality.
- x Water is a big concern, especially clean, safe water.
- x Too much building in A.J., where water is at a premium.
- x Need [to preserve] open space for recreation. Need an East Valley version of South Mountain.
- x Focus density around mass transit to increase usage.



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**LAND USE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

- x Public transportation is not only vital, but if it doesn't happen (the) Phoenix area will be exactly like L.A. (Los Angeles).
  - x Smog – we don't need any more lung problems.
  - x Land development is proceeding so fast that there will not be any place to put public transportation. Buying land is ridiculous.
  - x Freeways won't solve problem. We cannot build enough. Now are there enough places to build them?
  - x Must have incentive to get people out of their cars if public transportation is provided.
  - x The land around Williams Gateway needs strict control to emphasize industrial development and minimize residential development. It must become a major employment center and transportation hub.
  - x Biking trails are needed and need to be connected from one city to the next.
  - x Plan for rail and zone appropriately.
  - x Need some green space.
  - x Put more restrictions on desert growth. The future of wildlife and plants is being threatened.
  - x Complete East Valley freeways.
  - x [Need] more parks and open space.
  - x [Need] cooperation between cities for regional areas.
  - x [Need] light rail to all suburbs.
  - x [Provide] light rail to center of all cities – bus from there.
  - x Acquiring land for trail system before it is taken for economic development.
  - x Link land use/transportation planning.
  - x Emphasize more compact/mixed use urban form to help promote walking, biking, and transit use.
  - x Focus public expenditures in higher density, urban activity centers.
  - x Emphasize the creation of pedestrian-friendly environments.
  - x Increase funding levels for alternatives to the private auto.
  - x Better building practices. No more "cookie cutter" developments.
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#### LAND USE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ISSUES (CONTINUED)

- x Housing development with more space.
- x [Enhance] roads with [to provide] more bicycle lanes.
- x Keeping some land for public use.
- x [Provide] good senior activities with ways of getting them there.
- x Industrial centers need to be properly planned, access to these centers needs to be defined.
  - x As is the case of planning future freeways, land must be purchased in advance to avoid major land and relocation costs later.
- x [Build] light rail and improved mobility options.
- x [Need] public amenities. Schools must be good all over.
- x Regional system of hiking, biking trails is needed.
- x Light rail and commuter rail needed now and for future.
- x Transit centers should be established in each city.
- x [There is] concern over air quality. Need cleaner burning buses, trains, and auto.
- x Light rail can be used to increase densities.
- x Control development to encourage transit.

#### TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

- x Stop trying to reduce congestion; instead, focus on ways to manage congestion – transit, HOV lanes, HOT lanes, congestion pricing, etc.
- x Give people good alternatives to driving alone.
- x Protect Williams Gateway Airport area from residential encroachment.
- x Explore new options/technologies for reducing travel demand (e.g., car sharing, telecommuting centers, etc.).
- x Invest in ITS technologies.
- x Rail service direct to airport.



- x Must have an adequate transportation system.
- x Schools need to update technology.

**TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES (CONTINUED)**

- x Place commuter rail planning and development on top priority to relieve the freeway corridor congestion. Integrate commuter rail into the right of way of the freeways that criss-cross the Valley.
  - x Expand and exploit the existing right of ways that our freeways are in. Exploit the existing railroad rights of way and plan for commuter rail these routes.
  - x Add gasoline tax of \$.05 per gallon solely for funding commuter rail. Start now with Maricopa and Pinal Counties paying this tax. We can't delay any longer.
  - x Continue as we are with the proposed 20-mile light rail connecting Phoenix-Tempe-Mesa. Plan light rail for connecting inner city destinations.
  - x Do not fail to include commuter rail integration with any plans to widen US 60 between Power Road and points east.
  - x Williams Gateway needs to be developed as a regional passenger airport.
  - x The industrial area around Williams Gateway airport needs to be preserved for industrial development.
  - x Public transportation – to relieve congestion.
  - x Changing streets to one-way at certain times.
  - x Public buses or vans to take seniors to doctors and meetings.
  - x Specific transportation development source.
  - x Education – sales of transportation systems.
  - x Use of current infrastructure for future freeway (i.e. elevated connector rail).
  - x Commuter rail – bus – Park & Ride – express bus – transit system.
  - x [Need] light rail.
  - x Phoenix to Tucson high speed with stops in Casa Grande.
  - x Like to see some light rail or monorail system connecting major areas.
  - x Smaller systems to interconnect with major areas, etc. (Phoenix area, Mesa, Tempe.)
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- x Airport in central location with light rail or monorail system.
  - x Airport away from congestion of city.



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**TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES (CONTINUED)**

- x [Need] creative financing [to improve transportation improvements].
- x [Resolve] right of way issues.
- x Use of high-tech systems (monorail, etc.).
- x Build it right the first time – airports – freeways – arterial streets.
- x Freeway driving habits have changed.
- x Congestion is inevitable.
- x We can't build ourselves out of congestion, so we need more mass transit available.
- x There are more elderly who need public transit now and in future.
- x Need better governance of our regional transportation system. Current system unfair to all parts of county.
- x Encourage flextime to space out commuter hours.
- x Provide efficient door-to-door transit.
- x Rail system that is either above (overhead) or below grade of streets.
- x Rail should have fewer, larger stops with adequate parking for Park & Ride.
- x Commuter rail should be encouraged.
- x Disperse jobs to suburbs to cut travel.
- x Better transportation throughout the Valley.
- x Utilize the existing freeway right-of-way by running overhead trains down middle of freeway, like they use at Disneyland, fairs, etc.
- x Provide access trams to the trains, providing parking areas for autos of those using the overhead rail lines.
- x Make use of underground (subways) where feasible.
- x Need for light rail and commuter rail.
- x Bicycle and pedestrian paths/right of ways.
- x Having transit that helps build communities not blight.



- x A.J. does not have public transportation, but should.

#### TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGY ISSUES (CONTINUED)

- x Some people are too old to be driving, eyesight may be bad, slow reflexes hard of hearing, etc., but they still drive because they have to.
- x No bike paths, so teens who work can use. They use Main Street to get to work – very dangerous.

### PART III. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION COMMENTS

The following are issues that were identified by participants in an informal, roundtable discussion held during the East Valley Focus Group.

- x Build freeways correct the first time (do not keep widening in phases).
- x Need to focus on commuter rail within existing right-of-ways in all directions N&S and E&W:
  - \_ Can move more people quicker;
  - \_ Can tie into light rail; and
  - \_ Funding and planning needs to start immediately.
- x Link land use and transportation:
  - \_ Plan transportation by looking at future growth;
  - \_ Light rail and commuter rail; and
  - \_ Public transit.
- x Most important thing is to plan for future, specifically rail corridors.
- x Need safe bicycle lanes
- x Provide a true multi-modal transportation network that is linked.
- x Integrate the links between jurisdictions.
- x Elderly population needs more mass transit/public transportation.



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**PART III. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION COMMENTS (CONTINUED)**

- ✕ Need commuter rail and light-rail:
    - Existing rail lines are important; and
    - [Improve] quality of life.
  - ✕ Important that all cities agree with plan.
  - ✕ Should be a multi-modal plan.
  - ✕ Provide financial support to implement the plan.
    - ✕ Have legislature permit impact fees.
    - ✕ Provide open spaces within new development.
    - ✕ Densities should be guided by each city.
    - ✕ Commuter rail is essential.
    - ✕ Need to provide adequate park-and-ride stations.
    - ✕ Provide – lead transportation into major hubs.
    - ✕ Governance! Regional planning is required – need to reorganize so there is a “mega agency” responsible for distributing funding and regional planning. (Regional Governance Plan.)
    - ✕ Need a reliable funding source.
      - Develop revenue source.
  - ✕ Well-planned multi-modal transportation plan and use existing infrastructure and existing right-of-way.
  - ✕ Transportation plan needs balance between all modes.
  - ✕ Develop a performance based transportation plan:
    - need to fund projects that achieve transportation objectives; and
    - change criteria that will do the best for the region as a whole.
  - ✕ Need a procedure that brings all the jurisdictions to work together (regional governance).
  - ✕ Need commuter rail opportunities state to state (Amtrak).
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**PART III. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION COMMENTS (CONTINUED)**

- x Need adequate water for future growth.
- x Need to address air quality.
- x Need to make sure we have clean air and water (quality of life).
- x Need long-range planning along with transportation.
- x Need two-tier transportation system – a regional system and a citywide plan.
- x Use existing freeway rights-of-ways for mass commuter rail, monorail:
  - \_ Provide parking structures at park-n-ride stations; and
  - \_ Provide options.
- x Currently there is a lack of bicycle paths/trails (need to provide dedicated paths – on a regional basis).
- x Preserve the desert – maximize use of land (ex. parking structures under the store).



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## PART IV. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RECEIVED

May 2001

Revised July 2001

### MY CONCERNS AND OPINIONS ABOUT REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN THE GREATER PHOENIX AREA

The transportation planning staffs of the various city governments in the Valley have undoubtedly studied and made plans on the subjects that concern me about our multi-modal transportation system. However, because I have not seen public information that describes a comprehensive transportation plan, I wish to express my concerns in hopes that there are some ready responses that satisfy me.

1. Right-of- Way. I continue to be very concerned about the high cost of right-of-way acquisition and the time required to acquire it. Therefore, I feel strongly that maximum advantage should be taken to exploit existing rights-of-way to achieve multi-modal transportation. I believe that our economic infrastructure of business/employment/activity centers have already been developed along our existing freeways and other arterials. The travel destinations of people will continue to be between their residences and the business/activity centers, thereby reinforcing the premise that our existing highway rights-of-way should be expanded or modified to achieve greater transportation capacity.

I also feel that railroad rights-of-way should be exploited in creative ways to achieve greater utilization or capacity of these fixed guideways to move people traveling between home and job sites during normal rush hours. The occasional AmTrak passenger or freight trains do not utilize this valuable right-of-way resource near enough.

2. Commuter Rail. I would like to see a master plan for a transit system that integrates a network of commuter rail with the existing network of interstate, US and state highways and railroads in the Valley. This master plan commuter rail network should not encircle the metropolitan area like the Loops 101 and 202. Instead, the commuter rail lines should be identified to increase the capacity of the corridors that cut across the Valley from east to west, north to south, northwest to southeast and northeast to southwest like spokes on a wheel.

I believe that a commuter rail system that moves people from the far-flung suburbs to the metropolitan employment centers and back to the suburbs at high speed, is the best alternative to the personal vehicle-choked highways we now face and which will become grid locked in the future. I also feel that rapid transit



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**PART IV. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RECEIVED (CONTINUED)**

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for commuter travel should have a higher priority for funding than slow transit light rail for inner city travel. Our highways are choked now with morning and evening commuters that only rapid transit commuter rail can effectively relieve. The currently planned light rail between Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa will not relieve the congestion on our major freeway corridors.

3. Light Rail Transit. I believe that light rail transit is essential to the continued viability and economic health of our inner city areas. Each city in the Valley is working to develop its own town center as a destination for recreation, sports, arts and entertainment. These destination facilities are normally very large to accommodate/attract large numbers of people. And, these large expensive structures should not be encumbered with vehicle parking facilities equally as large. The places should be traveled to and from on public mass transit, thereby minimizing the costly waste of real estate for vehicle parking.

A prime example of an ideal route for light rail transit is along the Apache Blvd.-Main St.-Apache trail from Tempe to Apache Junction. This arterial corridor has become depressed with the completion and development of the Superstition Freeway, US 60. By laying in a light rail system on this long east-west route, this corridor would be rejuvenated with new businesses, residential upgrades, infill of vacant land and redevelopment. Light rail transit would become the economic engine that is needed for this now depressed corridor.

4. East Valley US 60. I believe it is foolish to continue ever increasing the width of roadways to handle increasing personal vehicle traffic. The planning to widen US 60 between Tempe and Mesa should have included incorporation of fixed guideway transit, namely commuter rail, along with widening of the roadbed. The right-of-way acquired for this corridor in the 1970s may have been designed by ADOT for vehicle traffic, but that does not mean it must forever be dedicated solely to vehicle traffic. Since the widening of US 60 east of Power Road has not been publicized or funded yet, it seems that new planning should be implemented now to incorporated commuter rail as far east as the Florence Junction.
5. Funding. The huge costs of rail transit are simply not adequately funded now and we simply must prepare the planning without further deadly. I strongly urge the MAG and ADOT to prepare a bill and secure



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#### PART IV. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RECEIVED (CONTINUED)

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sponsorship for the next legislative session for a ½ cent sales tax increase to fund commuter rail for Maricopa County. We must continue to strive for additional revenue to pay for this urgently needed infrastructure.

5. Regional Transit District. In concert with legislation for additional transit funding, I urge the MAG to prepare a bill and secure sponsorship to establish a new governing body for the greater Phoenix/Maricopa County area. This should be a regional transit district with the authority to plan, budget and implement all mass transit (commuter rail, inner city light rail and buses) in the region. This body should have at least three elected positions from Maricopa County representing Western, Central and Eastern Valley sections of the region.

Vern Mathern  
Vice Chairman, Mesa Transportation Advisory Board.

